

the human heart has hidden treasures by colazitron

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Summary:

Will can't sleep and hardly ever speaks, but it's easier with Mike there. El has so many questions. Mike talks and talks with El, and is quiet with Will. Somehow they all get better, one moment at a time.

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Author's Note:

Disclaimer: I am in no way affiliated with the characters depicted herein or their creators. I made this all up and am sharing it only for fun.

For tumblr-anon.

Of all the things Mike Wheeler's life is, boring is definitely not one of them.

If it's not Demogorgons, it's Mind Flayers, and if it's not that, it's Troy, and if it's not him it's his dad ranting about Russian spies, and if it's not that it's Chief Hopper making every visit out to El's cabin an affair worthy of the secret service. Between all that and trying to keep up with his school work, plan a campaign or two for their party and the inevitable hangouts at the arcade to see if Max can really beat all of them at every single game, Mike often feels like he barely has any time to breathe.

Frankly, that's how he likes it.

With breathing comes thinking, and with thinking comes that hollow feeling that starts in the middle of his chest and then just spreads until it reaches the farthest point of every one of his limbs, swallowing him up whole. Sometimes the empty hollowness sounds like the static of his SuperCom. Sometimes it sounds like Will thrashing and screaming in a hospital bed.

So, yeah. No breathing.

He feels better when he's with El. It's like having her right there in front of him puts a tiny thing in that hollow emptiness and stops it from swallowing all of him. He hopes it's because of the way she looks at him when she says "I understand", but sometimes he worries it's because looking at her puts things in perspective. Looking at her makes him think "well at least that didn't happen to you" and he feels awful for how it sometimes keeps him up at night wondering if he's

using her. He doesn't think he is. He loves her, he really, really does. He wants her to be happy and he wants to show the world to her and he wants everything good for her. That's what it is to love someone, isn't it?

It's how he feels about Will, at least, and he's pretty sure he knows that he loves his best friend. It's not the same with Will, of course, because he wouldn't ask Will to the Snow Ball or anything, but Will is precious to him, and so is El. He loves his family, of course he does that too. And Dustin and Lucas.

But there's a force to how he feels about Will and El that he doesn't feel with anyone else. There's something fierce that's ready to tear the world apart for them settled snugly into his gut. He doesn't even usually notice it, but when it comes down to it it suddenly roars to life and there's nothing Mike can think of that he wouldn't do for either of them.

Actually, seeing Will after the Mind Flayer had at first been almost as difficult as seeing El. Not because Mrs. Byers wouldn't tell them where he was, but because she wouldn't let them in. Mike knows Dustin and Lucas relented pretty soon, understood that Will needed rest, but Mike felt that thing in his gut claw and howl, and the fact that he couldn't see Will or El for days left him so on edge he got himself into detention for talking back to a teacher again.

He's pretty sure it's only because by the time Mom allowed him to bike over to Will's again after the most recent detention he had such dark circles under his eyes that Mrs. Byers let him in out of pity. All he and Will did that afternoon was fall asleep on top of his covers. Mike remembers waking up to a cramp in his hand from clutching Will's shirt so tightly.

"If you want," Mrs. Byers had said when he'd disentangled himself from Will and found her in the kitchen where he was going to get himself a glass of water, "I can call your mom and you can stay the night."

"Um."

Mrs. Byers had lit a nervous cigarette, her eyes looking like she had a

thing clawing at her guts too when she couldn't do anything to protect Will.

"It's just he's never slept for more than a few hour before since--" she'd said. "I can't help him, but you--"

Mike felt his shoulders square and the thing in his gut stick its claws into the ground and square its shoulders too. Here, finally, was a thing he could do.

So he slept over, and then he kept sleeping over at least once every week. Mrs. Byers told his mom it was because Will had missed so much school due to his condition that Mike was helping him keep up.

Sometimes he wondered if sleepovers would help El too. If sleepovers with El would help him not wake in a cold sweat fearing she'd been taken, or killed, or left, and he'd never get to see her again. But Chief Hopper made it clear in no uncertain terms that there were going to be no sleepovers, not least of all because they had no way of justifying them to Mike's parents who didn't even know where their son spent his afternoon when he was out at the cabin.

So when he was with El, he talked. He talked about school and about Dungeons and Dragons and he talked about movies and he talked about AV. And when he ran out of things to talk about, then El talked. About her dictionary, about television, about anything she could think to ask questions about. And then he'd answer. And when they ran out of strength to pretend they'd go quieter and talk about Kali, and the Bad Men, and the Demogorgons and Mind Flayer. About the hole that El tore in the wall and then sealed up again. About 353 days and about the Snow Ball. About what kissing means and what boyfriends and girlfriends are. About what love means and about how Mike is El's favourite person, and El is Mike's too, of course she is, but so is Will.

With Will, Mike hardly ever talked. They mostly slept. Or sometimes Will drew. Sometimes he'd just lie in his bed and stare at the ceiling, holding tight to some part of Mike. Mike didn't push for words, but eventually he suggested to Mrs. Byers that El and Will might both have things they could only properly share with each other. He only knows that Mrs. Byers took his suggestion to heart when Will quietly

thanks him for it and El tells him it's alright that Will is his favourite person too a week later before leaning in to kiss his cheek. Mike isn't sure what to do with that, but that thing in his guts practically purrs at the declaration, and Mike feels so overcome with some sort of giddy joy that he leans in to kiss her again.

It's spring by the time Mike and Will don't spend most of their time when Mike visits sleeping. Will's come back to school, before Christmas already, but he's still exhausted all the time. Pale as a ghost and skinny enough to look like a stiff breeze might knock him over. But he's getting better and sometimes Mike swears there's even a bit of colour in his cheeks when he looks over to check on him.

"Mike?" Will asks, looking up from where he's drawing. They're both propped up against the headboard of Will's bed, shoulder to shoulder.

Mike looks up from his English essay, determined to get it done before he has to go back home today and hums in question.

"Thanks for being here," Will says.

"What? Yeah. Of course I'm here," Mike says, feeling his face pull into a frown.

"Talking to El is good," Will goes on with a slight shrug. "But I like not talking with you too. El makes me feel like it was real, you know? But you make me feel like I'm not crazy."

The thing in Mike's guts roars and claws and Mike wants to find the fabric of the world and tear at it for daring to make Will suffer like this.

"Hey, we went crazy together," Mike says and reaches over to take Will's hand. "Of course we're going back together too."

Will beams at him at that, eyes happy and alive for the first time in months, and Mike can feel his own smile grow at the sight of it. At the door that night when Mike has to go back home, Will hugs him goodbye and, as they're pulling out of it again, smudges a whisper of a kiss to Mike's cheek. When Mike looks at him again, Will's own cheeks glow bright red, and Mike feels like the piece of a puzzle he

didn't even know he was trying to solve just slid into place.

Oh.

“Goodnight,” Will whispers.

Mike checks briefly that no one's spying on them through any windows and leans in to brush a kiss against Will's mouth that makes him gasp.

“Goodnight,” he mumbles when he pulls back, his own cheeks feeling as hot as Will's look.

For a moment it looks like Will's about to say something, but he never does, so eventually Mike turns around and grabs his bike, giving Will an awkward wave. But on the drive home, the spring air feels unusually warm, and the thing in his guts roars happily. Mike bites his lips against the grin threatening to break out over his face and pedals faster until he's panting so hard that the laughter that finally bubbles from his mouth makes him gasp for breath.

Mom sends him off to shower first thing, tutting and fussing, but Mike hardly cares. He's still grinning by the time he goes to bed, the thing in his guts purring. The emptiness inside him feels full for once, and the only sound he hears is the dull noise of the TV downstairs as he drifts off into sleep.

The End

Author's Note:

Come leave me prompts for fic advent over @fille-lionelle on tumblr, if you want!